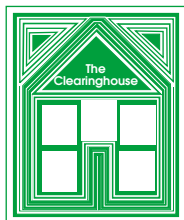


Clarifying Personal Values

DP 007 - Developmental Intervention

By

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Clarifying Personal Values

by Judith Marsh

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Overview:

Goals: to enable participants to resolve critical personal theme and values, pursuant to a satisfying lifestyle.

Target: General Population

Length: 6 sessions of 45-90 minutes, over several weeks or massed into one weekend.

Design: An eclectic collection of designs from several sources, notably Simon, S. *Meeting Yourself Halfway* (Niles, MI: ArgusCommunications, 1974) and Simon, S., et al. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practice Strategies for Teachers and Students* (New York: Hart Publishing co., 1972).

Sessions:

Session I: Name Tag, Favorites, Places, People, Me.

Session II: 20 Loves exercise, followed by subgroup and full-group discussions

Session III: Pie of Life exercise and self-contracting procedure

Session IV: Barometer of Values exercise, subgroups of similarly value-postured members discuss outcomes

Session V: Messages to the World exercise

Session VI: Personal Medallion exercise, evaluation and debriefing

Clarifying Personal Values

Introduction

An important requisite for effective functioning is the clarification of personal values so that one can pursue a lifestyle in concert with them. Most of the decisions we make in life are based on how and why we value things. Yet, so often people will say, “I don't know why I do this,” or, “I wonder why I always do that.” The answer is probably linked to some personal value—some need that is felt to be met by that action.

Values clarifying sessions can be useful for people of all ages and in all career positions. The size of the group is up to the facilitator, according to what size group conditions allow. I have worked with anywhere from twenty to 150 people in various workshops using this design, with each session designed to run from roughly 45 to 90 minutes.

As a primary goal to have people get in touch with their own personal values, it is important to share the seven criteria for a full value at the beginning of the first session (Raths, Harmin and Simon, 1966). A full value meets the following seven criteria:

1. chosen freely
2. chosen from among alternatives
3. chosen after due reflection
4. prized and cherished
5. publicly affirmed
6. acted upon
7. part of a pattern that is a repeated action

As you share the value criteria, choose a full value from your own life, telling how you chose it, how you consider the alternatives, the time you spent reflecting on it, and so on, down the list of criteria, to give a fuller example.

As facilitator, it is also important that you model what you ask others to do, wherever feasible. I suggest using an extra large piece of newsprint or an overhead projector and doing each step in an exercise for participants to see as they write on their own. This serves several purposes: it clarifies many of the directional questions, it provides a sense of timing for each phase, and it shows

the group that you are working on your own values, and are willing to affirm them publicly.

The following six sessions have been drawn from several sources and together provide a total design which can be quite useful in assisting people to clarify their personal values.

Session I: Name tags (60 –90 minutes)

This exercise is an easy way to help any new group relax and get acquainted. It also starts group members on the road to identifying what they value in their own lives. You'll need a sufficient number of 5 X 8 file cards, pens and safety pins.

Hand out the cards and instruct all the group to write in the middle of the cards the name they would like to be called. Then, ask them to write the numbers 1 to 3 toward the upper right hand corner of the card, and then proceed with the following instructions:

“Title this section 'Favorites.' Next to number 1, list your favorite song; for number 2, list your favorite way to spend Saturday night; and for number 3, list your favorite food.”

“Then, move to the bottom right hand corner and number 1 to 3 again. Title this section 'Places.' For number 1, name what you feel was the warmest, most comfortable room in your house when you were age seven. For number two, list what you feel is the warmest, most comfortable room in your present living space. Finally, for number 3, note your favorite vacation place.”

“Now move to the bottom left hand corner and number from 1 to 3 again. This corner will be your 'People' corner. For number 1, name the three most nourishing people in your life. These would be three people you like to be around most, and who really make you feel good about yourself. For number 2, indicate who is the most toxic person in your life. 'Toxic' as used here means that the person you have identified is a drag to be around, does not appreciate you for who you are or what you do, and probably makes you feel not so good about yourself. For number 3, write the name of the person in your life from whom you need more validation. This might be a person you see everyday or someone who is far away—but you need to hear from this person that you are 'OK', and positive viewing of you by this person is important to you.”

“The last section in the upper left hand corner is the 'Me' section, the place for things about you. Again, write the numbers 1 to 3. Next to number 1, list three qualities you like about yourself. By number 2, put down one thing new you have done to make your life better this past year. It might be something you changed, like wearing seat belts or stopping smoking,

but it should have had an influence that has improved your life. For number 3, write down one thing you could do to enrich your life more in the next six months.”

After all the participants have finished their cards, instruct them to pin the cards on themselves. For a few minutes, then, they are to walk around silently and read each others' name tags. Then they form groups of three, sit down, and take turns sharing one item (of their choice) from their card. Give them two minutes each to do so. Then they should have three more minutes each to share one of the areas in the “People” section.

For the last part, participants are then given two minutes each to share the three qualities about themselves that they like best. Participants ought to wear their name tags throughout the day since they serve as good conversation starters and they enable everyone to relate to one another by name.

Session II: 20 Loves (45 minutes)

This session is designed to put individuals in touch with the activities that alternately nourish, energize and relax them. Materials needed are a piece of paper and pencil or pen for each member. The following instructions are given to the participants once the materials have been distributed. "Take a sheet of paper and number down the center from 1 to 20. To the right of the numbers, draw vertical lines that divide that half into seven columns. Now think of the things in your life you like to do most and list them on the left side of the numbers. These may be big or small things. The most important criterion is that you enjoy doing them.

1. Now in the first column put an "A" next to those things you like to do alone. Put an "O" next to those things you like to do with others. Put an "A-O" next to those things you like to do alone as well as with others.
2. In the second column put a dollar sign "\$" for activities that cost you \$5.00 or more every time you do them.
3. In column three draw a heart next to those activities you need or want to do with someone you love.
4. In column four put "52" next to those activities you would like to do once each week for the rest of your life.
5. In column five put an "E" next to all the activities that involve exercise.
6. In column six put "80" next to the activities you still will be able to do if you live to be eighty and are in good health.
7. In column seven jot down the approximate date you last did each of these activities.

(I find it helpful to have prepared a large sample sheet to give the participants a visual picture of how their sheet should appear.)

Now divide the participants into groups of four and have them complete the following sentences about their feelings from this exercise:

1. What I learned was...
2. What I relearned was...
3. What I was surprised to see was...
4. What I need to do is...

The groups should have eight to ten minutes to share their responses and to debrief about the exercise. Then, ask if people would share their findings with the group as you call on them. This session is modified from Simon (1974).

Session III: The Pie of Life (45 to 60 minutes)

Most of us have at one time or another encountered the phrase, “I don't know where my time goes.” This session is geared to help people to realize where their time is going and how they are using their energies. Each person will need a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen for this session as well.

The facilitator begins by drawing a large circle on the board or newsprint, and the group is told that this circle represents a typical day in one's life. Then divide the circle into quarters with dotted lines, with each quarter to represent six hours. Then participants are to estimate how many hours or parts of an hour they spend on each of the following activities in a typical day:

1. Sleep
2. In classes (if group includes students)
3. At work (a job that earns money)
4. On homework or preparations for classes (again, if students present)
5. With friends, socializing, playing sports, etc.
6. Alone, reading, listening to stereo, watching television
7. On chores, laundry, housework, etc.
8. With family, including mealtimes
9. On miscellaneous other pastimes

Participants are then instructed to draw with solid lines a slice within their circle for each of the nine areas and label each slice. When all are finished, each person finds a partner. In dyads they ask themselves the following questions and share the answers to them with their partners:

1. Are you satisfied with the sizes of each area slice?
2. Ideally, how big would you want each slice to be? Draw your ideal pie.
3. Realistically, is there anything you can do to begin to change the size of some of your slices?
4. Is there something you would like to make as a “contract” with yourself to change?

Self-Contract

A self-contract might take the following form (present a visual display or handout on this):

I, _____, to better my life will _____

(your name)

(Whatever you need to do)

_____ Your Signature

_____ Signature of a friend (witness).

_____ Reminder date

(Friend calls up and reminds you of your contract.)

_____ Date contract is to be completed.

_____ Celebration Date

The date and way you and your friend will celebrate the completion and burning of your contract.

(This session is borrowed from Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1972)

Session IV: Barometer of Values (45 – 60 minutes)

The purpose of this session is to help people acquire insight into their own value positions and to gain an awareness of others' value systems. For this segment, it is suggested that the leader use a wide felt-tip marker and seven large sheets of paper, preferably newsprint, and you'll also need some tape. In this strategy it is necessary to identify and number specific locations around the room. This may be done using the paper and felt pens to designate the locations in sequence from -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3. This scale is representative of the following:

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	No feeling	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

To start, have the whole group cluster at zero. Tell them you will read a series of value statements twice each, and then for each item they should move to the specific location that best represents their feelings about that statement. Ask them to note how and to where they move, and how the majority of the group moves in response to their value posture on each statement. You may repeat the sentence again if asked, but be sure that you do not modify the wording of the statements. Here are some sample value statements (any items of local and topical relevance might be substituted here to modify the design for your own needs):

1. Children under 10 are responsible enough to make decisions.
2. Premarital sex is okay.
3. People learn violence from spanking.
4. The father should have the final say-so in family decisions.
5. Women are more effective dealing with young children than men.
6. Children should be able to make up their own minds about attending church.
7. Grades children earn in school are entirely their own business.
8. Alcohol is a more dangerous drug than marijuana.
9. Masturbation is healthy and natural.

10. Pornographic materials should be kept out of schools.
11. It is inappropriate for professional men to wear long hair.
12. A complete sex education course, including sexual methods, should be taught to teenagers in the schools.
13. Birth control pills and devices should be dispensed through the schools.
14. Formal education is the key success in life.
15. People with strong, formal religious beliefs are most effective when dealing with young people.
16. Men who cry are weaker than men who don't.
17. I support the principles of the Women's Liberation Movement.
18. Divorce laws should be stricter.
19. I support Capital Punishment for rapists.
20. Parents should be encouraged to stay together for the sake of the children.
21. There should be stricter abortion laws.

After this, instruct the group members to find four or five others whom they frequently found they shared similar positions with during the exercise. After they have formed their groups, repeat any five of the value statements again and have each group choose one of those statements to deal with in greater depth. Then they are to respond to the following questions surrounding that value statement as a group:

1. How do you hold these values?
2. What is the source or origin of these values?
3. How do you act on these values?
4. What validating experiences have you had which affirm these values for you?

This session has been adapted from a Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) course (Gordon, 1974), as taught by Bert Cohen.

Session V: What Would You Like to Say to the World?

(35 – 40 minutes)

The purpose of this session is to enable participants to focus on one important value and to determine how they each feel about it. Materials needed include a large pad of paper (18 X 24) or newsprint, crayons and/or colored markers, and tape. After they have been given out, give the group the following instructions:

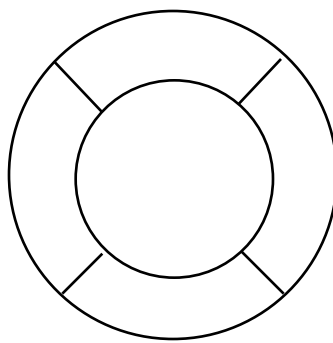
“Each of you has been given a large piece of paper that is to represent a free billboard your town council has just given to you. It is located on the main street or highway of your town or city. You are to use that billboard to display any message you want to give to others. Compose that message in any way you see fit, in response to the root stimulus “What I would like to say to the world is...”

After all have finished their billboards (allow about 10 minutes maximum) each member is to tape his/hers up around the room. Then, call for some to identify their billboards and share their meanings and why they chose them. Not all billboards need to be described, but sufficient time should be allowed to have several different ones explained.

Session VI: Personal Medallion (45 – 60 minutes)

The objective of this session is to have folks in the group examine the direction and quality of their own lives. For this exercise, each person will need newsprint and a pen or marker of some type.

Begin by having participants draw a circle about nine inches in diameter on their sheet of newsprint. In the center of that circle they should draw another circle about four inches in diameter. Next, they draw a line from the outer circle to the inner circle at approximately the 1:30, 4:30, 7:30 and 10:30 positions on the outer circle, as if it were the face of a clock (show them a sample) thus:



In the first section at the top of the “medallion” they are to symbolize what they would do if given a whole year to do anything they wanted with unlimited funds and a guaranteed success and outcome.

Going clockwise, in the next section, they are to symbolize what in their lifetime they consider to have been their greatest personal achievement. Then, in the bottom section, they are to symbolize three things they do to re-energize and be calm. In the last section they should symbolize one thing other people can do to make them happy. Finally, in the center circle, they are told to symbolize three qualities they would like others to remember about them.

All of these symbols preferably should be graphic, although they may be verbal if no visual symbol is forthcoming. When participants are finished, they are instructed to divide into groups of three. In these groups individuals are directed to take turns explaining their medallions and the meaning of each symbol. This serves as the final session of the workshop, and it provides a personal summarizing activity which helps draw together the several elements from the previous five meetings.

Author Commentary for the Leader:

Some additional factors I find to be very important for a successful workshop. For sure, the facilitator should avoid deadly statements such as, “That is dumb,” or, “you what?” and should value or honor statements made by participants. If people open themselves up to share their values and then find that they are “put down,” it may be a long time before they are willing to risk and share again.

Also, the setting should be comfortable and roomy. For some groups this may mean chairs—for others, a floor with pillows. Generally, participants should have enough room so that when they break into small groups they are far enough apart not to be disturbed by others. Good ventilation in the room is also essential.

I think it is important, too, that the facilitator talk about paying full attention early in the sessions. If one person is talking to the whole group or in a small group, the other group members should focus their full attention on that person by maintaining eye contact and allowing the person to speak without interruption. Many times, sharing values or experiences from one's life will trigger ideas, thoughts, and reactions within others that they want to share immediately by saying things such as, “I know what you mean,” or “Something like that happened to me.” However, such interrupting can cut off the speaker rudely with the result that the impression is conveyed that their viewpoint is not valued. By giving full attention to a person, we tell them, “You are worth listening to,” and “I care to hear you.”

Formal evaluation for this type of group can be difficult because outcomes cannot be measured readily. Value clarification is a process—hopefully, a life-long process.

The style of evaluation I like to use is to ask each participant to write his/her responses to the following stimulus items and to turn them in anonymously at the end of the last meeting:

I learned...

I relearned...

It surprised me to see that I...

I that I need to...

What was the highlight of the experience for you?

What was least useful to you?

What feedback do you have to give to the facilitator?

Bibliography

Gordon, T. *Parent effectiveness training*. New York: Wyden, 1970.

Simon, S. *Meeting yourself halfway*. Niles, MI: Argus Communications, 1974.

Simon, S., Howe, L., & Kirshenbaum, H. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972.